

Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; novelist Chinua Achebe; musician King Sunny Ade; Rev. Jesse Jackson, U.S. Special Envoy to Africa; and former Nigerian military leader Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Proclamation 7334—Women's Equality Day, 2000

August 26, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In March of 1776, 4 months before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Abigail Adams sent a letter to her husband John in Philadelphia, where he was participating in the Second Continental Congress. "...[I]n the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make," she wrote, "I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors." Almost a century and a half would pass before her desire was realized with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing women's suffrage.

The road to civic, economic, and social equality for women in our Nation has been long and arduous, marked by frustrations and setbacks, yet inspired by the courageous actions of many heroic Americans, women and men alike. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, Lucy Stone—these and so many others refused to remain silent in the face of injustice. Speaking out at rallies, circulating pamphlets and petitions, lobbying State legislatures, risking public humiliation and even incarceration, suffragists slowly changed the minds of their fellow Americans and the laws of our Nation. Thanks to their efforts, by the mid-19th century some States recognized the right of women to own property and to sign contracts independent of their spouses. In 1890, Wyoming became the first State to recognize a woman's right to vote. Thirty years later, the 19th Amendment made women's suffrage the law of the land. But it would take another 40 years to pass the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which promised women the same salary for performing the

same jobs as men, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed employment discrimination based on gender. Another 8 years would pass before Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 assured American women equal opportunity in education and sports programs.

However, the promise of true equality has yet to be realized. Despite historic changes in laws and attitudes, a significant wage gap between men and women persists, in traditional sectors as well as in emerging fields, such as information technology. While employment of computer scientists, programmers, and operators has increased at a breathtaking rate—by 80 percent since 1983—fewer than one in three of these high-wage jobs is filled by a woman. A recent report by the Council of Economic Advisers noted that, even after allowing for differences in education, age, and occupation, the wage gap between men and women in high-technology professions is still approximately 12 percent—a gap similar to that estimated in the labor market at large—and that, in both the old economy and the new, the gap is even wider for women of color.

To combat unfair pay practices and to close the wage gap between men and women once and for all, I have called on the Congress to support my Administration's Equal Pay Initiative and to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. And in May of this year, I announced the creation of a new Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Equal Pay Task Force to empower EEOC field staff with the legal, technical, and investigatory support they need to pursue charges of pay discrimination and to take appropriate action whenever such discrimination occurs. I have also proposed in my fiscal 2001 budget an initiative under which the National Science Foundation will provide \$20 million in grants to postsecondary institutions and other organizations to promote the full participation of women in the science and technology fields.

Today, a new century lies before us, offering us a fresh opportunity to make real the promise that Abigail Adams dreamed of more than two centuries ago. As we celebrate

Women's Equality Day and the 80th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, let us keep faith with our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters by removing any lingering barriers in their path to true equality.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 2000, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

William J. Clinton

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Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Obasanjo of Nigeria in Abuja

August 26, 2000

President Obasanjo, to the President of Niger, to the distinguished leaders of the legislative and judicial branches of the Nigerian Government, and all our friends from Nigeria who are here, I believe I can speak for the entire American delegation when I say thank you all for an unforgettable day.

And on a very personal basis, I want to thank you for enabling me to say something no previous American President has been able to say: It is good to be back in Africa for the second time.

I will say, Mr. President, I was very moved by your generous remarks, and I was very glad to have a Nigerian name. *[Laughter]* But now, you will have to give me a copy of your remarks so that when we go out tomorrow, I can introduce myself properly to the people of your country. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, it's a great honor for all of us to be here. I wish that my wife could

come, and your remarks indicated you understand why she could not. But I am grateful for her interest in Africa as well, and especially in the Vital Voices program that so many Nigerian women have been a part of.

We meet at a pivotal moment in your history. The long-deferred dreams of your people finally can and must be realized. I spoke about it in detail to the members of the Senate and House today. I will only repeat that it is a daunting challenge, requiring both rigorous effort and realistic patience.

Nigeria is poised to do great things for its own people and for Africa's democratic destiny. We in the United States have long known Nigeria as an economic partner and an important supplier of energy. But now, more than ever, we and others throughout the world will know and honor Nigeria for its greatest energy resource, the people of this great nation.

We have come to appreciate it in many ways: the musical genius of King Sunny Ade; the brilliant writing of Chinua Achebe; and your Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka. We also think rather highly of the basketball feats of Hakeem Olajuwon. And we're coming more and more to appreciate the football brilliance of the Super Eagles. Indeed, every 4 years a growing number of people in the United States actually cheer for the Super Eagles in the World Cup. After all, the eagle is America's national bird, too. *[Laughter]* And more importantly, tens of thousands of Nigerians work and study in the United States, and we are honored to have them.

I was quite interested, Mr. President, in the presentation before your remarks showing all the similarities between you and me. I would also like a copy of that. *[Laughter]* I don't know if I could persuade people back home with a case without all that evidence.

For all our differences, even in a larger sense, we are not so different after all. Our Capital—Washington, DC—like yours here, was created as a compromise between North and South. Though I must say, ours took much longer to become a respectable city. And as I saw today when I addressed your legislative branch, your Government, like ours, often displays what might charitably be called a creative tension between its different branches. *[Laughter]* Finally, our greatest